



# Rock Talk

The Official Newsletter of the Withlacoochee Rockhounds

## President's Message



*Musings, Updates, and More from Club President - Judith Birx*

**Happy New Year!!!**

I hope this year finds you in better health!

Let me start with our Gem show! It was a success!

Thanks to you (our members)! We made lots of money and had lots of fun!

We already have members excited to start on next year's show. Can you believe it? Several members have already expressed wanting to chair the committee. Can't wait to see how it works out for this year!

It is February and that means we have a party planned for our next meeting (2/9).

We will have food from Publix and some drinks as well! (no Alcohol).

Bring a wrapped rock-related gift so you can play rock bingo!

It will be fun!!!

The meeting starts at 7 pm and it will be short so that we can party!

It is February so the means dues are due!

This year we have decided to wave the \$10.00 membership fee for the Withlacoochee Rockhound membership.

However, we have to pay the senior center a fee for using the building. That fee is \$25.00 per person over the age of 18, per year. This fee will ensure us the use of the building and any classes or clubs of your choice.

This is due Now! If you need a membership form please take one from the front table or print one from the website or newsletter!

It doesn't look like this virus is ever going to leave us. So everyone needs to take care of themselves. Let's practice good healthy standards! Remember that you are attending this meeting and every event associated with the Withlacoochee Rockhounds is at your risk and welfare.

### This Month's Roundup of Stories

- President's Message
- Secretary's Report
- Emerald Tiara
- Pilbara region of Australia
- Sea Dragon Fossil
- Bench Tips
- 2022 Club Dues Explained

If you are not comfortable with the surroundings, please consider not coming at that time. Also if you are ill or have been around someone who is, please consider not coming.

Janice is our new VP! She is also the new program director. I know she will have lots of fun programs for us! Say Hello and offer her some of those great ideas you all have!

Lauren is a new director on our board! She has taken over the free Jewelry class once a month! Tell her your ideas on what you are interested in learning!

Let's not forget the William Holland Scholarship! We will have applications on the table!

I think I have filled you with enough thought and Joy!

Happy New Year!  
Judith Birx

# Secretary's Report

*Minutes and More from Club Secretary - Melodye Steverson*

**As we did not have a meeting in January, below is a re-play of our December minutes.**

*Withlacoochee Rockhounds Monthly Meeting*

*Date 12-8-21*

*Minutes*

*The meeting was called to order by President Judith Birx at 7 pm.*

*We all stood for the Pledge of Allegiance followed by a moment of silent prayer.*

*There were no new members to recognize.*

*There were no guests in attendance.*

*Michele Evans made a motion to accept the minutes of our November meeting as printed in the newsletter, Roberta Oldread seconded. Passed by all members.*

## *Old Business*

*President Birx began her announcements by re-stating that our meetings will continue to be held under CDC guidelines:*

- Masks are now required, even if you are vaccinated*
- We are not requiring you show us a vaccine card to enter the building*
- Use of hand sanitizer is advised*
- Practice social distancing*
- Room will be sanitized*
- Gloves recommended when handling money*

*The state is not requiring you to wear a mask, however, we are following the CDC guidelines.*

*If you are sick, please leave. Or if you were in contact with someone who has tested positive for the Corona Virus, please leave. If you are in the high-risk category, please consider not coming.*

*You are attending meetings and all activities associated with the Withlacoochee Rockhounds at your own risk.*

*Next for discussion was the Annual Holiday Party. It will be held on January 12th, starting at 7 PM. This year, our party will be catered to rather than having a pot-luck.*

*The Board is gathering information from various restaurants and will make a decision soon. We will be playing our Rock Bingo and we ask that any member who wants to play bring a wrapped rock-related gift so everyone can have a gift to take home.*

*There is a new rule this year: **If you have only one gift, it cannot be taken from you during the "Yankee Swap" portion of the bingo game.** We will go over the rules with you the night of the party.*

**President Birx continued the meeting by announcing that the Senior Center had raised their dues for 2022 to \$25 per member, up from \$15 per member in 2021. Rather than have our club membership go up an extra \$10 per person, the Board decided to pay our members' \$10 club fee for 2022.**

**Thereby, keeping your membership dues for 2022 at \$25 per member.**

**The Board decided that we would use some of the money we earned from the Gem Show to pay our members' dues this year to keep it from going up to \$35 each.**

**Board members Lynn Walters and Roberta Oldread reported on their experiences with the Gem Show and told everyone how successful it was.**

**Lynn Walters reported that the Vulcan Mine is still closed due to safety issues. She said hopefully it will be open in early 2022. She also said Jackson Crossroads Mine has agreed to open for a minimum of 20 people to come up and dig for amethysts. Peace River will be open soon and Graves Mountain will be open in April.**

**We then proceeded to the Annual Election of Officers and Board Members for 2022. Ballots were handed out and after being filled out, were collected and counted by Secretary Steverson.**

**Results are as follows: Judith Birx, President; Janice Wojcik, Vice President; Melodye Steverson, Secretary; Janet Wheeler, Treasurer. Board of Directors members are: Lynn Walters, Roberta Oldread, Lauren Bell, Michael Steverson, and Ralph Barber. Congratulations to all!**

**The meeting was adjourned at 7:55 pm.**

***Minutes respectfully submitted by Secretary Melodye Steverson.***

***Withlacoochee Rockhounds Board of Directors***

***Meeting Minutes***

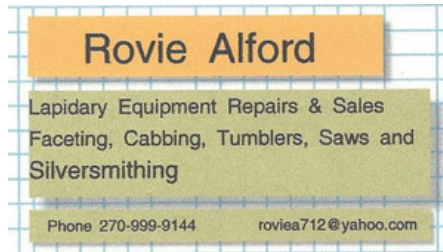
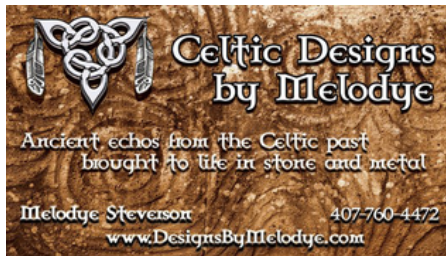
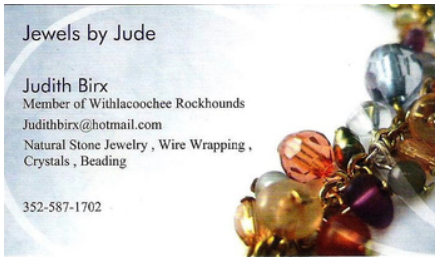
***Date 12-21-21***

**Attending Board members; Judith Birx, Melodye Steverson, Janet Wheeler, Ralph Barber, Roberta Oldread, Ginny Steverson, Lynn Walters, and Michael Steverson.**

**continued on page 8**



# Rockhounds Advertisers



## Your Business Card Size Ad in Rock Talk

The cost for non-club members to advertise their businesses in Rock Talk is \$10.00 per month.

Contact Michael Stevenson to set up an ad in both the newsletter and the club website. It will benefit both your business and our club.

If you ad has a web address, or Etsy shop address, I have linked to it.

### Advertisers Are Needed

Please help us find advertisers for the Rock Talk and our website.

The monthly income from these ads is beneficial to the club.

Both the Rock Talk and our website have more exposure than only club members.

Contact club treasurer Janet Wheeler: [ceecgirl@tampabay.rr.com](mailto:ceecgirl@tampabay.rr.com) or send to:

Withlacoochee Rockhounds  
PO Box 5634 Spring Hill, FL 34611-5634

# How an Emerald Tiara Napoleon Gave His Wife Ended Up in America—Without the Emeralds

Not the wife you're thinking of

This is my favorite kind of jewelry story, the tale of a jewelry twist of fate.

How do some pieces stay intact for centuries and others become dismantled, sold off as “parts,” lost forever to history?

This tiara chronicle offers a bit of both scenarios. The turquoise and diamond diadem pictured below began as a wedding gift from Napoleon to his second wife Marie Louise of Austria, in 1810; there was also a comb, a necklace, and earrings.

But there was no turquoise in it at the time—it was, when Bonaparte presented it to his bride, fitted instead with 79 emeralds.

It left France with its owner when her husband's empire collapsed and remained with her family until 1953, when a descendent sold it to Van Cleef & Arpels.

It was exhibited in the firm's window and soon pictured in a newspaper seductively offering “An emerald for you from the Napoleonic tiara.”

Provenance-mad clients bought up the Emperor's emeralds and Persian turquoise (considered the best) was soon placed in the original frame.

Swapping turquoise for emeralds?

Selling off historical artifacts? Debate ensued.

Many defended the action as giving the jewels a new chapter and offering a whole new generation of jewelry lovers the ability to wear and keep history alive. “People out there, maybe even someone you know, could be walking around with Napoleon's emerald on their finger,” someone once pointed out to me.

"The emeralds do, in fact, continue to circulate—in 2014 one appeared at auction clearly marked as such in the catalogue. And the turquoise tiara found its ardent fans. One in particular: Marjorie Merriweather Post, a great collector and recurring savior of historic pieces, who bought the turquoise diadem from Van Cleef and donated it to the Smithsonian in 1971, where it remains on view.

*Read the entire article here at [TownAndCountryMag.com](http://TownAndCountryMag.com)*

## In 2004, the Louvre Museum purchased Marie Louise's emerald necklace and earrings





# The Pilbara region of Western Australia is home to the fossilised evidence of the Earth's oldest lifeforms.

## Is the Pilbara the oldest place on Earth?

In recent years, science has confirmed what Aboriginal Australians, the world's oldest continuous living culture, always knew: the Pilbara region of Western Australia is among the oldest places on Earth.

The Pilbara began to form more than 3.6 billion years ago and its vast landscape of deep pindan reds and endless panoramas, which stretches from the west coast to the Northern Territory border, is an ancient, forbidding place. For those travelling to the region for the first time, the initial sense of space and solitude can be daunting: it's roughly double the size of Great Britain, but with a population of just 61,000, it is one of the most sparsely populated regions on Earth.

Scientists have determined that the Pilbara's vast formations of iron-rich rock, formed prior to the existence of oxygen and life itself, is the best-preserved example of the world's most ancient crust.

While other global iron deposits are thought to have formed at a similar time, the surface of the Pilbara remains unburied and undisturbed by geologically cataclysmic events.

According to Van Kranendonk, Pilbara rock is so ancient that it contains no fossils within its structure, yet stromatolites, the fossilised evidence of the Earth's oldest lifeforms, are found upon it. In 1980, 3.45-billion-year-old fossil stromatolites were found near Marble Bar in the Pilbara. These microbial cyanobacteria communities first existed when conditions on Earth could not support any other form of life, building bulbous reef-like structures as they released oxygen through photosynthesis.

*Read the entire article here at [BBC.com](https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-55345678)*



# Withlacoochee Rockhounds

## Membership Form

### 2022

Annual Dues: Individual member, \$25.00. Under 18 years of age, \$5.00.

☐

Check if returning member

☐

Check if current member  
with change of information

☐

Check if new member

☐

Check if under 18

Please Print Clearly

Last name

First Name

Street Address:

City

State

ZIP

Phone Number (s)

Email address:

You may now fill in the fields on this form if you are viewing it on your computer or tablet.  
Each field may be clicked on and then you may type in your information.  
You will still need to print out the form, but your added information should show on the form.

Give this completed form along with your check for dues made out to "Withlacoochee Rockhounds" to club secretary Janet Wheeler at a club meeting. Or mail the form and your check to:

Withlacoochee Rockhounds  
PO Box 5634  
Spring Hill, FL 34611-5634

2022



# Massive 'Sea Dragon' Fossil From Jurassic Period Unearthed

Imagine this thing swimming at you!

In February 2021 Joe Davis, a conservation team leader at the Rutland Water Nature Reserve in Great Britain, stumbled upon something that, at first, seemed like a series of rocks or pipes.

Davis, however, soon realized he'd actually discovered the fossil remains of a giant 200-million-year-old marine reptile.

A marine reptile that swam in the oceans during the Jurassic period.

And, thanks to its appearance, has earned the moniker Sea Dragon.

"Gizmodo reported on Davis' discovery, which scientists will explore in an upcoming episode of BBC Two's show, Digging for Britain. Paleontologists who helped to unearth the massive fossil say it stands as the largest Sea Dragon—or ichthyosaur—anybody's ever discovered in Great Britain.

Quite a feat as paleontologists have been collecting fossils of the marine reptiles in the region for 200 years.

*Read the entire article here at [Yahoo.com](https://www.yahoo.com)*



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The board meeting started at 6:30 pm and was held via the Internet on Zoom.

President Judith Birx had distributed the meeting agenda via Email.

This meeting was to primarily discuss the upcoming Annual Holiday Party. It began with a discussion of potential restaurants for catering. Several restaurants were brought up and will be contacted for prices. The plan is to have another board meeting in the new year to finalize details.

We decided to change one rule for our Rock Bingo game. If a member has only one present, it cannot be stolen in "Yankee Swap" portion of the game.

VP Janice Wojcik reported that she is planning some very nice programs for the year.

We are getting back to our free jewelry class. Lauren Bell will be teaching in February. Pamela Gonzalez will be teaching a class on soldering metal and Melodye Steverson will be teaching stone cutting. These will be scheduled in the next month.

The Board has decided to award one scholarship to William Holland School of Lapidary Arts this year.

The gathering at Live Oak will be held February 18-20th. Booths are \$50 and members are invited.

The Board decided to call all of the members regarding the party and dues for 2022. President Birx will split up the contact list and assign portions of it to each of the Board members to call.

New Vice President Janice Wojcik asked for a new contact list including all recent new members. Michael Steverson said he would send her and all the other Board members a new list.

Lynn Walters said she sent a message to Saul Mendoza at Vulcan Mine and has not heard back from him.

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**Withlacoochee Rockhounds**

Our monthly club meeting is held at the Weeki Wachee Senior Citizens Club, 3357 Susan Dr., Spring Hill, FL 34606, on the 2nd Wednesday of each month from 7:00 to 9:00 PM

[www.withlacoocheerockhounds.com](http://www.withlacoocheerockhounds.com)



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Please help us find advertisers for the Rock Talk and our website. The club can use the monthly income. Both the Rock Talk and our website have more exposure than only club members

Contact club treasure Janet Wheeler: [ceegirl@tampabay.rr.com](mailto:ceegirl@tampabay.rr.com) or send to: Withlacoochee Rockhounds PO Box 9834 Spring Hill, FL 34811-6834

## Withlacoochee Rockhounds

### Purpose

We are a non-profit organization whose purpose is to foster interest and promote knowledge of minerals, gems, fossils, lapidary arts, and earth sciences, through regular meetings, informative programs, workshops, and field trips. PLUS, our annual gem, mineral and jewelry show.

Membership is open to anyone sharing such interests.

### Dues

Dues are \$25.00 annually for adults, and \$5.00 for children under 18 years of age.

### Club Meeting Location and time

Weeki Wachee Senior Citizens Center, 3357 Susan Dr in Spring Hill. The meetings are held the second Wednesday of the month at 7:00PM

## 2022 Club Officers and Appointees

President	Judith Birx	352.587.1702	<a href="mailto:judithbirx@hotmail.com">judithbirx@hotmail.com</a>
Vice President	Janice Wojcik	813.677.6263	<a href="mailto:jfwojcik@verizon.net">jfwojcik@verizon.net</a>
Secretary	Melodye Steverson	352.683.9496	<a href="mailto:melodye@designsbymelodye.com">melodye@designsbymelodye.com</a>
Treasurer	Janet Wheeler	727.938.3644	<a href="mailto:ceegirl@tampabay.rr.com">ceegirl@tampabay.rr.com</a>
Rock Talk Editor	Michael Steverson	407.376.5570	<a href="mailto:highlander56@gmail.com">highlander56@gmail.com</a>
Club Webmaster	Michael Steverson	407.376.5570	<a href="mailto:highlander56@gmail.com">highlander56@gmail.com</a>
Mailing Reporter	Janet Wheeler	727.938.3644	<a href="mailto:ceegirl@tampabay.rr.com">ceegirl@tampabay.rr.com</a>
Gem Bag Coordinator	Gloria DuPont	352.848.5199	<a href="mailto:ddupont@tampabay.rr.com">ddupont@tampabay.rr.com</a>
Audio/Visual Coordinator	Michael Steverson	407.376.5570	<a href="mailto:highlander56@gmail.com">highlander56@gmail.com</a>

### Board of Directors

Judith Birx (President)	Janice Wojcik (Vice President)	Melodye Steverson (Secretary)	Janet Wheeler (Treasurer)
Roberta Oldread (2022)	Lynn Walters (2022)	Lauren Bell (2022)	Michael Steverson (2022)
			Ralph Barber (Past President)





## Bench Tips from Brad Smith

### Brad Smith's *Bench Tips* are a monthly feature of Rock Talk

#### MAGNETIC TOOL BAR

An easy way to keep all your files organized at the bench is to use a magnetic tool strip. They're not expensive and help keep a lot of small tools from cluttering the bench top. I got a couple of them from Harbor Freight for about \$5 each. See <http://www.harborfreight.com> and search on-"magnetic-holder"

My only regret was putting some of my small drills on the magnets. The drills got a little magnetized and now stick together when I carry them in a bottle in my tool box.



#### SILVER DISCOLORATION

Working with jewelry involves an ever increasing number of skills. Chemistry is one of them that comes into play when dealing with a discoloration on the metal caused by a chemical reaction between it and the environment.

In the case of Sterling silver, there are three discolorations we typically encounter: a tarnish, a firescale, and a firestain. Each is different in its cause, in its cure, and in its prevention. All three have to do with components of the Sterling alloy (92.5% silver and 7.5% copper) and how they react with oxygen and the heat of soldering or with pollutants in the air over the long term. Firescale and firestain also occur in 14k or 18k gold because of the copper content.

Tarnish is a grayish coating that builds up slowly on the surface as a result of a reaction of the silver with sulfur-based compounds in the air. Typically these are pollutants from the burning of petroleum fuels, but they can come from other sources as well. I once tarnished all the silver in my display case by putting a pretty specimen of iron pyrite in with the jewelry. Turns out pyrite has sulfur in it!

Sulfur from air pollution or any other source combines with the silver to form a grayish silver sulfide film on the surface. Preventing tarnish involves keeping sulfur away from the metal. Plastic bags will help, and anti-tarnish strips are available from jewelry supply companies to pack near your items. Tarnish is easily removed by hand polishing with a jeweler's cloth or with one of the products sold for cleaning the good silverware for holiday dinner.

Another way is to remove it chemically. Put a piece of aluminum in the bottom of a dish large enough to contain your piece. Heat enough water to cover the silver. Mix in 2 tablespoons of sodium carbonate per cup of water and pour into the dish. Be sure the silver touches the aluminum. Sodium carbonate is the main ingredient in washing soda. Read the labels in grocery and hardware stores.

The second type of tarnish is called firescale. It is the dark gray to charcoal colored film that forms on Sterling or other copper alloys like brass or bronze when we heat it with a torch. The copper in the alloy reacts with oxygen in the air to form a dark cupric oxide coating on the surface. Luckily, the oxide is easily removed by dissolving it in a mild acid - generally called a pickle. It's important that we not let firescale form on a solder joint because it will block the flow solder over the joint.

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Learn New Skills with Brad's "How To Do It" Books

[Amazon.com/author/bradfordsmith](https://www.amazon.com/author/bradfordsmith)

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There are two ways to prevent firescale.

The most common is to use a flux, a borax-based solution applied to the metal before soldering. When melted, borax forms a thin glassy layer that keeps oxygen away from the metal.

A second way is to do your soldering on a charcoal block. Together with the flame, charcoal greatly reduces the amount of oxygen in the area being soldered.

In either case, oxygen is prevented from reaching the metal, so no cupric oxide firescale is formed.

A second oxide can also be formed when soldering copper or a high copper content alloy like bronze or brass.

It's called cuprous oxide and is reddish in color.

That's why a black-looking piece you put in the pickle sometimes comes out red.

Problem is that while the black cupric oxide is dissolved by a pickle, the red cuprous oxide is not.

The discoloration can be sanded or polished off, but an easier way is to use a "super pickle".

This is a mixture of fresh pickle with a healthy shot of hydrogen peroxide from the local store.

I've saved the worst form of discoloration, firestain, for last.

Think of firescale (above) as like getting dirt on your shirt that you have to wash off.

Firestain is like getting ink on it. The discoloration is not just on the surface, it seeps down and stains the material.

Firestain happens when we heat a piece of silver too hot, too long, and/or too many times.

Firestain occurs when the oxides start to build up below the surface of the metal. You generally don't notice it until after polishing. It appears as a darker area of the surface and is easy to spot when viewed under light bounced off a piece of white paper. Because firestain is below the surface, there's no easy bench tip solution. Depletion gilding may work for some pieces.

Otherwise, removing it calls for sandpaper and aggressive polishing.

A much better approach for a piece that will require a large number of solderings is to protect the metal from developing firestain by applying liberal amounts of a firecoat.

Regular soldering flux will provide some protection but is not as effective as preparations made specifically for the task. Jewelry supply companies offer several commercial solutions, but my favorite is the Prips mixture.

I use it every time I intend to do more than two solderings on a piece.

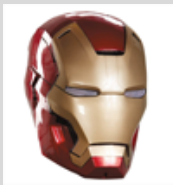
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## Rock Talk Funny Papers



"Come on...no one would be dumb enough to buy those in a million years!"





## From The Editor

### Hello to all Withlacoochee Rockhounds

It is I, your friendly neighborhood editor again.

If you missed our December meeting, you missed a chance to vote for your club officers and Board of Directors. Thank you to the club members who were at the meeting. And, thank you to our new members. Nice to have you as part of the Withlacoochee Rockhounds family!

We continue to follow the latest CDC guidelines, and the CDC is advising that vaccinated AND non-vaccinated individuals wear facemasks when gathering indoors. We are wanting to keep everyone COVID-free. So, PLEASE wear your mask when you are attending our next meeting.

If you would like to place a business card ad in the newsletter, please feel free to contact me, and we'll get you added to the next available issue.

Additionally, if any of you have not received your newsletter or are not receiving my e-mail blasts (meetings, rock sales, etc.), *please* check your spam folder. If you still are not receiving them, please contact me, and let's make sure I have your correct e-mail address. I have a few of you who unsubscribed from the mailings. I cannot add you back to the list. You have to subscribe to get back on the list. It's a permissions thing.

Our Board would like our members to come up with suggestions for Programs to be presented at our monthly meetings. What would you like to see? What would you like to learn? What would you like to know? Is there something you'd like to teach or present? You can help our club expand its educational repertoire. We'd love to hear from you all.

Contact any Board member or bring your written suggestions to a meeting.

Rock On!!!

Club Phone Number - 352.587.2714

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### Warning to Withlacoochee Rockhound Members

*During the last several months, illicit requests have been sent to members of various clubs in the US, including the Withlacoochee Rockhounds, asking members to purchase gift cards that would be used as donations to various organizations.*

*These are SCAMS.*

*Be advised that our club has never and will never ask members to buy gift cards or provide any form of monetary funds to anyone or any organization by phone call, email, or any other method of communication.*